

## **MEDIA POLICY:**

### **THE RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION MEDIA GUIDELINES**

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) Communications/Public Affairs Office oversees RIDOT's public information program including media relations, media campaigns, press releases, op-ed and article writing, speech writing, legislative correspondence, annual reports, newsletters, the Department's web site, social and new media sites such as Twitter, Blogspot, and Facebook, and special events that often involve the Governor and the Congressional delegation. The following is policy to identify the responsibilities within RIDOT for media relations and to provide guidance to all RIDOT employees regarding media interaction.

While a wide variety of employees may be asked to provide expert information for specific media needs the Communications/Public Affairs Department is responsible for all media relations. The media often randomly contact various offices within RIDOT looking for someone to speak with. In order to serve the media and ourselves well, all media calls must be directed to the Communications/Public Affairs Office first. It may be that the person the media called is the correct person for them to speak with, but directing the media to this Office provides a way for RIDOT to track its coverage in the media and provide an efficient and coordinated response. It also serves to ensure that the media speak with the person with the most expertise on the subject.

Controversial, local, state, or national issues give major focus to transportation issues covered by the media. Individuals are often asked to speak to the press regarding matters of policy, crisis, highway safety issues, transportation management, construction projects, and enhancement projects.

The primary spokespeople for RIDOT are the Director, the Deputy Director, the Chief Engineer, the Chief Public Affairs Officer, and Public Affairs Staff, however, any RIDOT employee who speaks to the press acts as the Department's spokesperson. It is the decision of the Communications/Public Affairs Office and/or the Director's Office as to who might be the best source of information.

Employees should keep in mind that this policy remains in effect when receiving inquiries via e-mail, e-mail listserv groups, blogs or other electronic communication. These communications should not be answered by employees but forwarded to the Communications/Public Affairs Office. Unsolicited distribution of information to the media is prohibited and employees may be subject to sanctions as outlined in RIDOT's Acceptable Use Policy ([www.dot.ri.gov/humanresources/forms/AcceptableUse.pdf](http://www.dot.ri.gov/humanresources/forms/AcceptableUse.pdf)) and other policies and regulations.

Additionally, this policy remains in effect regardless of the location of the inquiry, whether it takes place at job sites or at public meetings or presentations.



Should an employee be contacted by the press the following steps must be followed:

- Obtain the reporter's name, publication, and phone number;
- Alert the Communications/Public Affairs Department.

The media often are working on a tight deadline. When calls come in, response to them must be prompt and courteous. The goal of the Department is to have a positive and pro-active response to every contact.

In a crisis or emergency situation, RIDOT will designate a site for media briefings. During situations such as this, the Director's Office, the Communications/Public Affairs Office and the Governor's Office will be the only ones to release information to the media and general public.

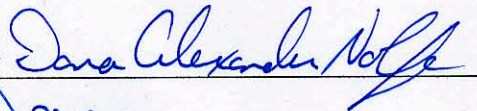
Media requests for information, documents, statistics, and other materials are to be addressed as quickly as possible. However, requests for documents (not including RIDOT policies or documents created for the public) must complete an Access to Public Records Act (APRA) request. A copy of this form is available on-line at [www.dot.ri.gov/publications/opnrcrdsinitialrequest.pdf](http://www.dot.ri.gov/publications/opnrcrdsinitialrequest.pdf). The full statute of Rhode Island's Access to Public Records law, including information on exempt documents, copying costs and hourly research fees, can be found at [www.rilin.state.ri.us/statutes/title38/38-2/INDEX.HTM](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/statutes/title38/38-2/INDEX.HTM).

Access to RIDOT facilities by the media must be coordinated through the Communications/Public Affairs Office. The Office will then coordinate the interview prior to the scheduled arrival of the media.

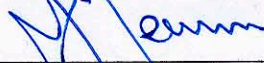
If a situation arises that an employee speaks to the media without contacting the Communications/Public Affairs Office first, that employee must let the Office know of their media interaction as soon as possible.

This document replaces all other documents relating to communications and media policy.

Chief Public Affairs Officer



Director



Date

1/22/09